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Michael Fulcher Professor Pecora English 1413 24 July 2012 The Truth about Anabolic Steroids When someone thinks about drug related deaths they might think of cocaine, ecstasy, or heroin but very few people think of anabolic steroids. Some people wonder, what is an anabolic steroid? A steroid is a basic four-ring carbon structure, but different types differ in the number of carbon atoms attached to the number 17 carbon atom in the molecule, and in the way which hydrogen (H), oxygen (O), and the hydroxyl (OH) groups connect to the carbon atoms. To put it simply, it's a manmade drug that mimics testosterone in the body. There are many other types of steroids but for this article the focus is anabolic steroids. It is an illegal drug that people, mostly politicians and general public that don't know any better, claim kills hundreds of athletes and non-athletes every year while others, doctors and users, call it a wonder drug that saves lives every day? When someone hears about steroid use they might think of athletes using them to gain an edge in their respective sport or body builders using them to gain size and strength. Steroids do these things but they are also used every day in hospitals to help treat asthma, burn victims, cancer patients, and even HIV and AIDS patients plus many more. Which type of steroid also affects what laws they fall under? Prednisone and estrogen can be given as a prescription and are not controlled but anabolic steroid testosterone is controlled. Why then, are anabolic steroids illegal? Today steroids are among the most prescribed and safest drugs in the world. During the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, Korea, Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson won the gold for 100m final defeating the American Carl Lewis, who was also on performance enhancing drugs but it was covered up stating he used without intent to gain an advantage. Ben was then submitted for drug testing which he failed. His

urine was found to contain stanozolol, an anabolic steroid, and he was disqualified after which the gold was given to Carl. After this the U. S. Congress considered putting steroids on the controlled substance list even though the AMA (American Medical Association), DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), FDA (Food and Drug Administration), and the NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse) were opposed. The opposition claimed that steroid use did not lead to a dependence on the drug like cocaine does. It was placed on the list as a schedule III item in the Anabolic Steroid Act of 1990. This made having Anabolic Steroids the equivalent of having a kilo of cocaine. Placing steroids on this list also raised the criminal penalties for offences as possession, distribution, and use. Because of the campaign against steroids lead by congress the public has been misinformed. Now many people claim that steroids are harmful and kill hundreds of athletes every year by claiming heart attacks, strokes, and even cancerous tumors have been caused by using steroids. The truth to this is that there hasn't been any long term study to back up these claims by any scientific means. In a study done in 2009 by the Center for Disease control and Prevention (CDC) it was stated that there were 24, 518 alcohol-induced deaths, but for steroids, no direct number for this year was given which could mean that there were no steroid related deaths during 2009. It is not stated however, that there are any steroid related deaths. Now there are some side effects to taking anabolic steroids and not everyone will experience all or any of them. These effects can include thinning hair; acne on face, back, and chest; shrinking testicals, mood swings due to increased testosterone. Anabolic steroids are more dangerous to young teenagers because they can cause stunted growth. What the steroids do is cause the male estrogen to rise and this

causes the growth plates to fuse early, this is why women are usually shorter than males. It can also cause gynomastia, that is when breast tissue forms in males. This is not usually an issue in adults over 21 because most have finished growing and their hormone levels are more stable. Most teens take steroids to enhance their image, thinking that the steroids will make them look better because of added muscle mass. Other reasons teens use steroids is to gain strength for sports and peer pressure. Women should not take steroids unless prescribed by a doctor. Anabolic steroids will raise the amount of testosterone in the body and can cause unwanted side effects. The woman's voice will get deeper, facial hair can start growing, and breast tissue can diminish. Many women who use steroids and exhibit some of these side effects may have wigs, breast implants, and take some type of estrogen to try to counteract the amount of testosterone. Almost all of these side effects can be controlled by taking ancillary drugs. These are drugs made to counter the side effects of steroid use. They can even increase the desired effects. The sad thing is there are no drugs to offset the side effects of alcohol or tobacco. Anabolic Steroids have a large effect on men over 50 and they can do it legally. It's called HRT or Hormone Replacement Therapy. If an older man has a doctor test his IGF-1 levels (Insulin-like Growth Factor) and the test shows they are low the man can be legally prescribed anabolic steroids. Usually man over 50 have about 30% less testosterone than males 30 and below. With the boost most men say they feel motivated and young again. It is true that steroids have side effects but the same can be said for all drugs. According to Drugs. com, most drugs have two categories for their side effects; they are the common side effects and severe side effects. Zoloft has a list of over 50 severe side effects including memory loss; red, swollen,

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blistered, or peeling skin; hostility, and even unusual bruising or bleeding. Viagra can cause irregular heartbeat; vision changes or loss of vision; ringing in ears or sudden hearing loss. Tylenol can cause dark urine; clay-colored stool; even jaundice. Even Ibuprofen can cause you to cough up blood or vomit that looks like coffee grounds; urinating less than usual or not at all; fever; sore throat; headache with a severe blistering, peeling, and red skin rash. Those are common drugs that you can get as a prescription or just buy over the counter. Why are these drugs legal if they can cause life threatening problems? It is because these side effects are very rare.

Methodist, a type of steroid, can cause shortness of breath; swelling or rapid weight gain; bone pain; increased thirst; memory problems; confusion; nausea; weakness; muscle twitching; and jaundice. What's the difference if the side effects are just as rare as all these other drugs and even less life threatening? These are all serious side effects and anyone experiencing any of these should contact a doctor immediately. Steroids do have many uses in medicine. Steroid hormones or sterones are used to help control metabolism, inflammation, immune functions, salt and water balance, development of sexual characteristics, and the ability to withstand illness and injury. Topical steroids are the most common and are used to treat rashes, eczema, and dermatitis. Inhaled steroids are used to treat sinuses or lungs (Epinephrine); corticosteroids are used to treat arthritis, allergic reactions, asthma, hepatitis, Crohn's disease, and sarcoidosis. These are just a few examples of steroids that are being used every day by millions of people. Enter Gregg Valentino. He was once known as the man with the world's largest biceps, until he became "The Man Whose Arms Exploded". Gregg trained as a competitive bodybuilder naturally for twenty three years; this means he did

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not use any substances to gain an edge. He was not satisfied with his size and resulted to using steroids to gain muscle mass. Soon after he quit competing and changed his goal, he wanted to become as large as he possibly could. He had stated that his mishap was the condition of the needles he was using, reusing needles and not properly cleaning them. When his arm became infected he recorded himself trying to drain the infection from his bicep by using the same needle he used to inject the drug to suck out the blood and pus. After filling two glasses with drainage he decided to go to the hospital. The result was emergency surgery to clean the infection and remove part of his bicep. Even though his arms are still huge he claims he is self-conscious about the scar and the slightly deformed bicep muscle. Because of the freakish size and shape of his muscles other bodybuilders accused Gregg of using Synthol, it is known as site enhancement oil. It mimics the appearance of muscle development where the muscle might not look as full. Synthol is made of 85% oil, and 7.5% lidocaine and alcohol and users directly inject the oil into the muscle or muscles they want to inflate. Because it is sold openly as a topical ointment it is not restricted. Although Gregg is accused of using Synthol he has denied these claims. There are steroid myths around and "Roid rage" has to be the biggest. To put it simply, it's fake. Someone on steroids can have mood swings because of the increased testosterone but people who were jerks before steroids will still be jerks after and people who were calm or mellow before would still be calm and mellow. There are myths about shrinking the penis but in truth the opposite happens because steroids can increase your sex drive. Heart disease- there are no studies that show any link between anabolic steroid use and heart disease but studies do show that men with

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higher testosterone levels can have a higher than average heart and circulatory health. They say all steroid use will damage your liver. This is only true with pills and actually does less damage than an aspirin does. This is not due to the drug but a chemical process that was built into the pills.

This process lets the drug bypass the liver's function and get deposited into the blood stream. Without this process the liver would destroy most of the drug before it could pass into the blood stream. People claim it damages your kidneys but this is simply not true. Even though the medical industry demonizes steroid use to the American public it continues to use them as one of their most popular drugs for the treatment of many illnesses.

Although there are many reasons not to take steroids there are just as many reasons not to use other drugs that just might be in your medicine cabinet.

In conclusion, steroid use has not caused an epidemic of deaths despite the use by athletes and non-athletes for over forty years and that even the risk of side effects are minimal or even reversible. Today steroids are being used more and more by young teenagers and athletes so they may get bigger and stronger. If you decide to use steroids just do some research so you may know the side effects or ask a doctor. Steroids are not the killer drug that people claim they are, they are just misunderstood. Think of Magic Johnson. He has had AIDS for about a decade but due to Anavar, an androgenic anabolic steroid, he still looks healthy and strong. So, what's more dangerous? Using steroids to get bigger and stronger or getting caught without a prescription?